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Letter dated 1 December 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In a letter to you dated 10 November 2000 (S/2000/1087), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon raised serious allegations regarding actions of the Israeli navy vis-à-vis a Lebanese boat. The details as described in the above-noted Lebanese letter, in fact, misinterpret and misrepresent what was indeed a humanitarian gesture by Israel towards a Lebanese boat that had accidentally violated Israel's territorial waters.

In the early hours of 10 November 2000, Israeli radar detected a Lebanese tugboat west of the city of Tyre, heading south towards Israeli territorial waters. The boat crossed into Israeli waters at approximately 2 a.m., maintaining its southerly course. At that point, an Israeli naval vessel approached the tugboat. Attempts at radio contact failed. A flair was fired into the air to help in identifying the boat and contact was established with the captain. The captain explained that his boat, the *Riballah*, had four crew members on board and was sailing from Tripoli to Tyre. He maintained that, owing to an electrical disorder, its navigational equipment was damaged and the boat had lost its way. The captain said that there was also damage to the engine and the boat lacked oil. The boat was requested to remain in the area while attempts were made to aid in restoring it to seaworthiness, and then the boat was escorted back to Lebanese territorial waters at approximately 5.30 a.m. The Israeli vessel left the area only when it became clear that the *Riballah* could return safely to the port. No financial charge was made for this aid to a ship in distress.

During the entire incident, the Israeli navy remained in contact with United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) forces in southern Lebanon.

I would emphasize that, despite the current tense situation and the potential threat presented by such a crossing without establishing radio contact, the Israeli navy acted with extreme restraint and good-neighbourliness. Additionally, since Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon last May, Israel has not carried out any naval activities within the territorial waters of Lebanon. Israel continues to act in accordance with Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 1310 (2000) and expects Lebanon to do the same.

* Reissued for technical reasons.

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I wish to request that the present letter be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yehuda **Lancry**
Permanent Representative